

supposed to go to the bill. We are now, at 11:15, going to go to the bill, and then we want the regular procedure as we consider legislation, which would be whoever has the right of recognition and any unanimous consent agreements.

So I object to the second unanimous consent request.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Connecticut.

IRAQ WITHDRAWAL AMENDMENT

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I had hoped to offer an amendment today to this year's Defense authorization bill regarding Iraq. I understand the leadership has decided to act on the Levin-Reed amendment before considering other amendments to this legislation. Given the existing parliamentary situation, I am not confident there will be an opportunity to get an up-or-down vote on my amendment or, for that matter, any other amendments that meaningfully mandates a change of course with respect to the administration's policy in Iraq.

It is deeply troubling and it saddens me that in the Senate, on the most critical issue of our day, we cannot consider, debate or vote on amendments affecting the lives and well-being of our servicemen and women and the conduct of U.S. foreign policy in the most troubled spot in the world today. I believe those who refuse to allow this Senate to vote on this critical issue do a grave disservice to the American people by enabling the President to continue with his failed strategy in Iraq.

Every additional day we "stay the course" in Iraq, our Nation is less safe and the people of Iraq get further away from coming together to fashion a political and diplomatic solution to their civil conflict. Our men and women in uniform have served this Nation valiantly in Iraq and Afghanistan, and they will continue to do so, I am confident, until our political leaders see the error of their judgment in this case and begin the process of drawing down U.S. troops in Iraq.

It is imperative, I believe, we change course in Iraq immediately. I think this is vitally important for our country and the well-being of that part of the world. Sadly, the President and his allies stand in the way of that goal. Support for the President's policy erodes as each passing day unfolds with more violence and chaos in Iraq.

I predict the day will come when Congress will have the courage to say enough is enough, but, sadly, it would not be before more American lives are lost or more wanton destruction occurs in the beleaguered nation of Iraq.

Let me speak briefly about the amendment I had hoped to offer—still hope to offer—and which I would like to offer at the earliest opportunity if, in fact, this logjam breaks. My amendment seeks to accomplish two critical

tasks. First, to bring the Iraq war to a close by ending the financing of combat operations, mandating a phased redeployment of combat forces from Iraq, and ensuring the administration actually carries out that redeployment.

Second, the amendment proposes to redirect any savings realized from a reduced military presence in Iraq, to restore the readiness of our very war-battered National Guard and armed services. I strongly believe we must not wait any longer to achieve either task.

Now is the time for us to make difficult choices. Now is the time for the Senate to enact legislation that, I believe, will hold this administration accountable to this policy.

I support the Levin-Reed amendment, and I thank both our colleagues, the authors of that amendment, for demonstrating leadership in trying to move this body one step closer to bringing this disastrous war to a close. It is my hope that their amendment will do that, but I remain concerned about some aspects of that amendment—the extended delay in commencing redeployment and the absence of any funding linkage to redeployment. Based on past experiences with this administration, my concern is the President will simply ignore the legislation proposed by the chairman of the Armed Services Committee and the senior Senator from Rhode Island.

It has been quite difficult to track the ever-changing justifications for continuing our combat operations in Iraq, including the surge, and there appears to be no end in sight.

First, the administration simply refused to admit there was no military solution in Iraq or that Iraq was in a State of civil war.

Then, instead of acting upon a unique chance to implement the bipartisan Baker-Hamilton Commission, which Congress supported, Secretary Rice explained that the administration was implementing a surge tactic, but assured us that it was an Iraqi plan. "Most importantly," she claimed, "the Iraqis have devised their own strategy, and our efforts will support theirs."

Our country was told that despite the catastrophic policy failures of this administration up until that point, that the surge would take time to work and that we couldn't judge its success until U.S. forces had "surged" to their maximum levels—and that would take up to 6 months.

But that the surge is at full force, and we are told yet again that the time isn't right to make a judgment about the success or failure of the administration's policy. Now we are told we must wait until September to determine the success of the surge. I strongly suspect, as I stand here in July, that as September draws near the administration will once again come up with some additional arguments to delay the day of reckoning on the policy in Iraq.

I do not need any more time, or any more reports and briefings to confirm

what most of us already know. The American people and the Iraqi people don't need any more time to realize that the administration's Iraq policy, including the surge, has been a failure. With the exception of a handful in this body, I have not said anything that most of my colleagues do not believe themselves. Why, then, are we waiting? As we wait yet another 2 or 3 months to decide what most of us here have already concluded, while disagreeing about how best to achieve this result, there is a consensus that has emerged that I think is probably more than a supermajority. After all the time waiting here, our servicemen and women and the beleaguered people of Iraq will pay an awful price indeed, as we fool around and dicker while deciding to come to the conclusion we have all basically reached already.

The highly respected International Crisis Group recently released a report on Iraq which examined the complex reasons for the current political violence in Iraq, and concluded that any surge based on a purely military operation with a simplistic view of the bloodshed's origins was destined for failure.

We mustn't sacrifice any more lives, we shouldn't countenance any more bloodshed, and we shouldn't support the continuation of the failed escalation of a disastrous policy. The April-May American death toll is a new 2-month record. The civilian casualty rate in Iraq is at an all-time high. Overall violence in Iraq is up and, according to the Iraqi Red Crescent, the number of internally displaced Iraqis has quadrupled since January. In fact, the Iraqi Red Crescent warns that there is currently a human tragedy unprecedented in Iraq's history."

As recent GAO reports have highlighted what we all intuitively have concluded—that there has been little progress on the key detailed provisions of Iraq's hydrocarbon law, let alone on reforming the Iraqi constitution, on deBaathification, or on a host of other essential political components to a functioning Iraqi government, focused on reconciliation. In fact, Foreign Policy magazine recently released their "failed state index" and Iraq rose to No. 2 on that index, closely behind Sudan.

The President told the American people that the surge of troops into key cities in Iraq was being executed in order to provide the Iraqis with some political breathing space to start the reconciliation process. Secretary Rice explained that "the most urgent task now is to help the Iraqi government establish the confidence that it can and will protect all of its citizens, regardless of their sectarian identity, and that it will reinforce security with political reconciliation and economic support."

But none of that has happened—and falsely claiming that it has, won't make us safer, won't secure Iraq, won't secure our interests in the region, and won't rebuild our military.

As my friend Senator LUGAR, the ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee said recently

In my judgment, the current surge strategy is not an effective means of protecting these interests. Its prospects for success are too dependent on the actions of others who do not share our agenda. It relies on military power to achieve goals that it cannot achieve. It distances allies that we will need for any regional diplomatic effort. Its failure, without a careful transition to a back-up policy would intensify our loss of credibility. It uses tremendous amounts of resources that cannot be employed in other ways to secure our objectives.

I fully agree with my friend and colleague from Indiana.

That is why my amendment also calls on the administration to appoint a high-level special envoy to Iraq to engage in a new diplomatic offensive—exactly what the Baker Hamilton Commission called for over 6 months ago. It is imperative that we engage Iraqi leaders, regional leaders and international organizations such as the United Nations and the Arab League to promote reconciliation and stability in Iraq. I know of no other way this is likely to occur.

This administration has long neglected the key diplomatic and political aspects of the conflict in Iraq, despite the calls of many of us, including my good friend Senator HAGEL, who recently outlined a plan to “internationalize” our efforts to help Iraqis reach political reconciliation, including appointing a U.N. Security Council-backed international mediator.

The amendment offered by Senators LEVIN and REED also calls for such a mediator, which I fully support.

But, despite the fact that there is no military solution to this conflict, which we have said for now almost 3½ years, this administration and too many in the Congress are still wedded to only military solutions. In fact, these defenders of the Iraq war continue claim that we are in Iraq to fight al-Qaida, just like they continue to falsely claim that al-Qaida had links to Saddam Hussein.

But according to a recent article by Michael Gordon, the coauthor of *Cobra II*:

al-Qaida in Mesopotamia [the action of al-Qaida currently in Iraq] did not exist before the Sept. 11 attacks. This Sunni group has thrived as a magnet for recruiting and a force for violence largely because of the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, which brought an American occupying force of more than 100,000 troops to the heart of the Middle East, and led to a Shiite-dominated government in Baghdad.

Moreover, according to recent media accounts, it is the Mahdi Army, a Shiite militia led by the radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, not al-Qaida in Mesopotamia that poses the greatest risk to American troops in Baghdad. Yesterday, the Washington Post reported that the Mahdi Army’s frequent and brazen attacks on U.S. soldiers also appear to challenge the idea that the Mahdi Army has been lying low to avoid confrontations with Americans.

Perhaps most frustrating of all, while feverishly attempting to find linkages between Osama bin Laden and Iraqi insurgents, the administration has taken its eye off the ball of the bigger threats posed by looming terrorists having little or nothing to do with Iraq.

The GAO recently slammed the administration’s anti-terrorism efforts in a report entitled “Law Enforcement Agencies Lack Directives to Assist Foreign Nations to Identify, Disrupt and Prosecute Terrorists.” The report found that there is a tremendous deficit of communication and coordination among key U.S. agencies, which in turn severely hampers our efforts at fighting international terrorism and aiding foreign governments in doing so.

Six years after 9/11, this administration has singularly focused on Iraq, while failing to effectively fight international terrorism. It may be true that for the Bush administration that Iraq is the central front in their “war on terror”, but this misplaced focus has made America less secure as a result.

Simply put, we must stop the downward spiral in Iraq, and refocus our efforts at effectively and robustly combating extremism and terrorism around the world—and my amendment would begin to do just that. Why is that the case?

Because my amendment sets clear timelines for the phased redeployment of our troops out of Iraq, with three specific exceptions for activities that are critical to our national security interests and the interests of Iraq: First, conducting counterterrorism operations in Iraq, targeted at al-Qaida in Mesopotamia; second, training and equipping Iraqi forces; and third, force protection for U.S. personnel and infrastructure.

This amendment also provides a specific timeline for all combat forces to redeploy out of Iraq, aside from the three exceptions I just mentioned, by April 30, 2008.

To ensure that this process gets underway without any stonewalling by the administration or anyone in his administration, my amendment sets an interim deadline of December 31, 2007, at which point at least 50,000 troops must have been redeployed out of Iraq.

Failure to meet this initial milestone will result in a funding penalty. The amendment would withhold 25 percent of the fiscal year 2008 military budget for Iraq-related activities until the President certifies that he can meet the overall April 30, 2008, deadline.

Ultimately, this amendment calls for the redeployment of approximately 90,000 combat troops within the next 9 months, leaving about 70,000 to complete the three non-combat missions that I have already outlined.

The redeployed forces would be comprised of a majority of the deployed Army brigade combat teams and the Marine Expeditionary Force currently in theater.

Now, some may say that such redeployment is not logistically achievable

within the timeframes laid out in the amendment.

However, I want to remind my colleagues that in the ramp up to the first gulf war, the Department of Defense coordinated the movement of over 500,000 troops and 10 million tons of cargo and fuel in the same timeframe that this amendment grants to redeploy a force one-fifth the size.

In January 1991, alone, the Transportation Command moved approximately 132,000 troops, 1 million tons of cargo, and over 1 million tons of fuel. If it is possible to coordinate the logistics to go to war, it is certainly possible, in my view, to get our troops out of harm’s way and bring our military involvement in this civil war to a close.

Of course, there is always a concern about the cost of conducting a redeployment. Senator CONRAD, now chairman of the Budget Committee, asked this very question to the Congressional Budget Office in 2002, requesting an assessment of the costs of the Iraq war; including the eventual redeployment of our forces. The CBO concluded that the redeployment of our forces to their home bases would cost approximately \$7 billion, less than the cost of 1 month of ongoing operations in Iraq.

Can we trust this figure? The very same report notes that monthly costs for the war would run between \$6 billion and \$9 billion per month—that was in 2002; which is exactly what we saw until the incursion of additional surge related costs.

Up until now, the cost of the war in Iraq has been mainly measured in the number of lives lost and U.S. Treasury spent—and rightly so. Mr. President, 3,600 brave American servicemembers have been killed, tens of thousands of Iraqis have lost their lives, and Congress has approved approximately \$450 billion.

But there is yet another cost of war—our military’s readiness.

While long, arduous deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan are testing the morale of our troops in the field and their families, they are also taxing critical stocks of aircraft, vehicles and equipment that our military needs to prepare for other challenges in the 21st century.

According to recent military reports, two-thirds of the U.S. Army is unable to report for combat duty, and the Army’s top generals have said that if the administration continues to fail to meet these needs, the situation could further deteriorate.

The situation for our National Guard is even worse. According to National Guard Bureau Chief, LTG Steven Blum, “88 percent of the force that are back here in the United States are very poorly equipped today in the Army National Guard.” Such a statistic is unconscionable to me—and it affects the National Guard units in every State of every last Senator in this Chamber.

My amendment will take steps to remedy this dire situation and begin to rebuild our military. This debate is

about priorities. Will we continue to fund a failed strategy, in my view, in Iraq that is leaving us less secure and that is hollowing out our military?

Or will we meet our commitments to our service members and our Nation, by restoring the readiness of our forces which have been severely damaged by this administration's policies?

In my view, the answer is simple. Our military's top generals and admirals have submitted to Congress lists of critical military priorities that would not be funded under the President's fiscal year 2008 budget proposal.

Billions of dollars a week are being squandered in Iraq, while our Nation's military is calling out for additional resources to repair the damage caused by the administration's policies.

My amendment therefore re-prioritizes our defense budget to rebuild our military. It stops financing combat missions in Iraq and redirects funding to meeting priorities for the armed services.

Savings made available by downsizing our force in Iraq would be invested in items identified by each of our military's Service Chiefs. Funding levels for these items would not exceed the amounts specified in their official fiscal year 2008 unfunded requirements lists submitted to Congress earlier this year.

The Army Chief of Staff has found over \$10 billion in critical shortfalls, including funding for specially armored trucks known as MRAPs or mine resistant ambush protected vehicles; night vision goggles, and bomb disposal gear.

The Marine Corps' "unfunded requirement list" submitted by the Commandant includes over \$3 billion for similar priorities as well as new helicopters; communications gear and training equipment.

The Navy's list totals over \$5.6 billion, including helicopters, sailor housing, and aircraft maintenance.

The Air Force's unfunded priorities, totaling over \$16 billion, includes much needed resources to modernize radar systems and restore our fleet of cargo aircraft to help redeploy our troops and their equipment.

The National Guard Bureau Chief has identified over a billion dollars needed to begin rebuilding Guard forces across the United States—to replace and repair vehicles, aircraft, and personal gear, necessary for homeland security missions.

The amendment I would like to offer would allow for funding to restore National Guard equipment readiness. Due to the administration's mismanagement, the National Guard is facing a \$38 billion equipment shortfall, according to General Blum.

A recent report by the U.S. Commission on the National Guard and Reserves disclosed that the administration's policies have actually endangered the Guard's abilities to perform both their overseas and homeland defense missions. Under orders by the ad-

ministration, the National Guard troops have been forced to leave their State's equipment in Iraq and Afghanistan for our troops rotating into combat theaters. Many of their military vehicles and aircraft are being worn down or destroyed in battle, but any critical equipment that may have survived is simply being transferred to other units coming into Iraq and Afghanistan.

In my home State of Connecticut, the adjutant general, MG Thaddeus Martin, recently reported that equipment shortages exceed \$200 million in my State. This includes more than 200 humvees, 21 large support vehicles and tankers and heavy-cargo vehicles, over 600 personnel and crew-served weapons systems, over 1,500 night-vision devices, and even one medium-lift helicopter.

What does all of this mean? It means that we are short of equipment to respond to natural or manmade disasters here at home, short of equipment for training, short of equipment to maintain the standard of maintenance rotation for equipment currently in the field, short of equipment for units deploying into harm's way—short of equipment to protect the American people themselves.

The Government Accountability Office highlighted this very important point in testimony released on October 20, 2005, and I quote it. It stated:

The cumulative effect of these personnel and equipment transfers has been a decline in the readiness of Army National Guard forces for future missions, both overseas and at home.

This data alone should demonstrate to everyone unequivocally that each of us has to fulfill our obligations to our warfighters. Now is the time to begin the rebuilding process. In my view, the sooner we redeploy out of Iraq, get our military out of that situation, the sooner we can redirect these vital funds to rebuild our forces here at home.

None of our choices are easy. I don't suggest by my remarks here that they are. But they are clear choices. It is about time we made them. To govern is to choose the policy that is best for our Nation, even in the face of extreme difficulty. So I call on my colleagues here today to make those choices which experience, commonsense, and overwhelming data compel; that is, to force the President to redeploy, to rebuild our Armed Forces, and to end this disastrous involvement in the civil war.

The last several months have been a story of squandered chances. We have paid for them in American lives. Again, to delay another 2 or 3 months to arrive at a conclusion most of us have already arrived at is something I think is unacceptable. And that lives which may be lost or damaged because we waited 2 or 3 months to arrive at a conclusion that most here already believe to be the case, is certainly a sad day for this body. We cannot even have votes, we cannot even consider the var-

ious ideas we bring to the Chamber that might bring this war and our involvement in it to a close.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1585, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1585) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2007 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Nelson (NE) (for Levin) amendment No. 2011, in the nature of a substitute.

Levin amendment No. 2087 (to amendment No. 2011), to provide for a reduction and transition of U.S. forces in Iraq.

Reed amendment No. 2088 (to amendment No. 2087), to change the enactment date.

Cornyn amendment No. 2100 (to amendment No. 2011), to express the sense of the Senate that it is in the national security interest of the United States that Iraq not become a failed state and a safe haven for terrorists.

McConnell amendment No. 2241 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 2011), relative to a sense of the Senate on the consequences of a failed state in Iraq.

Durbin amendment No. 2252 (to amendment No. 2241), to change the enactment date.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 2274 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2011

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the amendment.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Connecticut [Mr. DODD], for Mr. LEVIN, for himself, Mr. REED, Mr. SMITH, Mr. HAGEL, Mr. KERRY, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. OBAMA, and Mrs. CLINTON, proposes an amendment numbered 2274 to amendment No. 2011.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.